



الهيئة الوطنية  
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب  
National Authority for Qualifications &  
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

# Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

British Language Centre  
Janabiya  
Kingdom of Bahrain

**Date Reviewed: 25-27 February 2014**

VO076-C2-R077

## Table of Contents

---

<b>The Directorate of Vocational Reviews</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Description of the provision.....	2
Scope of the review.....	2
<b>Table of review judgements awarded</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Review judgements</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Overall effectiveness .....	4
Learners’ achievement .....	6
The quality of provision.....	7
Leadership and management.....	10
<b>The provider’s key strengths</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>14</b>

## The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

---

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the DVR is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the DVR's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a four-point scale:

<b>Grade description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good.
4: Inadequate	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.

## Introduction

---

### Description of the provision

The British Language Centre (BLC) was established in 2009, it is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer general English courses for learners aged five years to adults. All BLC courses are of 30 hours duration, and are categorised to three groups according to age ranges. Children courses for learners aged five to 11 years, which include Phonics and general English courses, general English courses for young people for learners' aged 12 to 15 years, and English courses for adult learners aged 16 years and above. Adult English courses include general English, conversation, business English, preparation for International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and report writing courses.

BLC operates from one centre located in Janabiya and owned and managed by two partners; the strategic and the operational directors. The centre employs educational and quality assurance coordinators; together with the operational director comprise the quality assurance team. The institute also employs six teaching staff, a finance officer, an administration team leader, who supervises three customer service staff; one of whom is also in charge of information technology support, one security staff, and one caretaker. All staff members are employed on a full-time basis.

During the last two years, BLC enrolled 5,685 learners; 2,656 learners were enrolled in 2012, and 3,029 learners were enrolled in 2013. Children general English courses make around 29% of the total enrolment of 2012 and 2013, young people courses make around 31%, adult courses including IELTS make 31%, phonics courses make around 7.76%, and business English courses make around 1% (conducted in 2012 only).

### Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of five reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, studied documents and materials provided by the institute and interviewed staff, learners, parents and teachers.

In the previous review, the institute's overall effectiveness, learners' achievement, quality of teaching and courses were judged good support and guidance, leadership and management, and the capacity to improve were judged outstanding.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

## Table of review judgements awarded

---

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
<b>Learners' Achievement</b>	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
<b>Quality of Provision</b>	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade: 2 Good
How well do courses meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade: 1 Outstanding
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade: 1 Outstanding

## Review judgements

---

### Overall effectiveness

**How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?**

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

BLC provision is outstanding overall. Learners' achievement, courses offered, support and guidance provided to learners, and leadership and management are outstanding while the quality of teaching and training is good. Most learners make at least good progress from their starting point and a significant number make outstanding progress. They develop very useful knowledge and skills as well as confidence and critical thinking.

BLC learners are enthusiastic and generally have the ability to reflect critically on how well they are progressing and plan for further improvement. Learners are supported with effective teaching delivered by certified native speakers who provide excellent role model to learners. A wide range of teaching strategies are used to engage and motivate learners. BLC teachers utilise the outcomes of learners' prior attainment and continuous assessment effectively in lesson planning, which generally accommodates the varying needs of learners. Assessment is rigorous and learners are provided with effective verbal and written feedback on how to improve. Detailed records on learners' progress are kept and resources are good and used effectively to promote learning.

BLC offers a wide range of well-planned and structured English language courses for different age group of learners with progression which are relevant to both learners and stakeholders. Courses are reviewed and updated regularly and are supported with effective additional activities to enrich learners' experience. BLC learners are provided with effective support and guidance to help them achieve better outcomes and reach their full potential. Different categories of learners are identified and provided with the needed support and the impact on performance is closely monitored. Comprehensive advice and guidance is provided to both learners and parents on course selection and further study and both parents and learners are updated regularly on learners' progress.

The centre's staff members have a strong sense of a shared purpose and individuals and teams are directed effectively and employed to support improvement. Self-evaluation and strategic planning are rigorous, systematic and accurate. Management is well-focused on continuous improvement, particularly in raising learners' achievement and informed evaluation of practices where the outcomes are used for further improvement. All data relevant to learners' achievement is kept, analysed and used to inform management of

trends and issues. Qualified staff are recruited, sufficiently deployed and closely monitored. Health and safety policies and practices are thorough and the provider places high priority on the safety and well-being of learners and staff.

BLC's capacity to improve is outstanding. Pass rates are maintained high, at 94% for the last three years. The institute has effective quality assurance measures in place that include regular evaluation and review of all the processes to ensure continuous improvement. This evaluation includes input from all parties involved including staff, learners and parents. There is a clear and demonstrable commitment to improve all aspects of the provision. New courses are introduced during the last year which include study skills, phonics for children less than six years old and foundation levels for young learners and adults. BLC keeps comprehensive data on learners' achievement which enable the management to have a very clear picture of learners' progress and effectively utilise these to inform decision making.

Improvements made to provision include the use of an interactive system for collecting learners' feedback, recruiting full-time quality assurance and educational coordinators, and equipping all classrooms with smart boards. BLC initiated communication with Edexcel to quality assure all courses and has started a partnership with a UK University to provide BLC's learners with opportunity for further studies in the UK. Moreover, the centre is planning to introduce a software to promote interactive learning, and is working on developing a new comprehensive management information system. BLC has sufficient and appropriate physical and human resources to enable improvement to be carried out. Enrolment has significantly increased between 2011 and 2012 by 59.29% and there is a reasonable increase in the enrolment between 2012 and 2013 by 14.64% and repeat business is maintained good at 73% for the last two years.

## **Learners' achievement**

### **How well do learners achieve?**

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

Most BLC's learners make significant progress from their starting point in all courses. This is evident in the observed lessons, standard of learners produced work, and end of course results. A significant number of learners make outstanding progress and develop self-confidence and positive attitude towards their learning. In addition, learners progress well over course levels. Management and teachers follow up learners' achievement very closely and provide effective support to different groups of learners to ensure that they progress and reach their full potential.

The vast majority of learners achieve high proficiency rates reflected in the standards of knowledge and understanding seen in the lessons observed and learners' written work. Learners consistently gain and develop high levels in all English language skills and acquire and improve other useful soft skills such as presentation skills and critical thinking.

Most learners achieve the certificates they aim for in a timely manner with overall achievement and retention rates of 98% and 95% respectively. Learners' achievement is effectively measured through different types of summative and formative assessments which are closely linked to the course objectives. BLC has a clear grading policy where the pass mark is set at 67.5%. Parents and learners are highly satisfied with the learning experience and a number of them stated that BLC courses improved learners' performance at school as well as their self-confidence. Most IELTS learners interviewed stated that they succeeded in obtaining the required score to be enrolled in the universities for which they aim.

Learners are keen to demonstrate their understanding and take great pride in their work. The majority of learners reflect critically on how well they are progressing. This is most evident in the lessons observed through the way they answer probing questions and the explanations they provide. Moreover, learners are requested to fill a self-assessment form, in which they reflect on the level of their language skills, identify their own strengths and weaknesses and set plans to further improve their performance by choosing realistic and achievable targets. They also show the abilities to work independently and collaboratively. A few learners still need further support from teachers inside classrooms.

The vast majority of learners show a very high level of enthusiasm and commitment to their learning which is reflected in their regular attendance and punctuality, and the immediate return back to their classes after breaks. BLC has a clear attendance and punctuality policy



which is shared with parents and learners and effectively implemented. The centre conduct timely follow-ups in case of any absenteeism or lateness. Attendance and punctuality rates are maintained high over the past three years. However a small proportion of learners are coming late for their lessons for more than 10 minutes.

## **The quality of provision**

### **How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?**

#### **Grade: 2 Good**

BLC teaching is good overall. Teachers are native English speakers, certified in teaching English language, they use a variety of teaching techniques and are good role models to learners. Teachers plan sessions well, with performance based objectives that are aligned to the developmental levels of the learners. The differentiated activities are informed by prior assessments of their attainment and clearly define what is expected from the learners. BLC utilises a management information system that holds separate folders for each course containing course planning, resources and activities. Teachers use these as their reference point for each session, and make the necessary modifications as a result of the previous sessions.

Sessions start on time with appropriate linkage to the previous sessions and most teachers share lesson objectives with learners at the beginning. Clear learning outcomes and success criteria are embedded into lessons and teachers use positive praise strategies such as rewarding 'star of the day', 'star of the week' and 'reading rewards charts' to motivate learners. Lessons are mostly learner-centred, which promote interaction and enthusiastic participation through role-play, question and answer sessions and pair work. A range of resources such as video clips, hand-outs and smart board are effectively utilised to support active learning. Most lessons integrate technology to attract learners' interest and ensure a thorough understanding of the lesson objectives; for example, utilising online stories and activities that promote phonics and reading skills; particularly for children. Additionally, in the majority of the lessons observed, learners are encouraged to work independently and in a significant minority of lessons, teachers facilitate learners to think critically. However, a few learners, particularly the less able ones, are not supported enough during a few of the observed lessons. Similarly the challenge offered to enable learners to further their understanding is inconsistent in the lessons observed.

Learners' work is marked consistently and teachers provide effective verbal and written feedback on their homework, class activities and progress reports. Assessment is rigorous, based on specific criteria, and evaluation is moderated by the quality assurance team.

Moreover, teachers maintain and update 'student performance data', which is an explicit result sheet of various assessments based upon the learning outcomes. Teachers use these colour coded data to identify different abilities learners and plan effective lessons, learning activities and homework according to the individual learning needs.

## **How well do courses meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?**

### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

BLC offers a wide range of English language courses with progression levels for three categories of learners; children, young learners and adults. Adult English language courses include general English, conversation, business English, preparation for International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and report writing courses. The syllabus used is published by Cambridge University Press and all course levels are mapped to the Common European Framework. The children's curriculum and levels one to four of the young people's curriculum are based on the Middle East versions to ensure that course materials are culturally sensitive and accessible.

BLC conducts effective analysis of the surrounding environment and requirements of the community that it serves, in addition to the analysis of the available national market needs surveys and skills gap and utilise these analysis to inform the provision. Study Skills and Phonics courses were launched in response to stakeholders' specific needs as well as analysis of learners' achievement and feedback of teachers. Phonics courses have been developed for children aged five years to meet stakeholders' demand to enrol younger learners. The aim of these courses is to improve literacy and spelling skills needed before proceeding onto beginners levels. In addition, the young people's study skills course was designed to develop general English language skills and study skills for learners at a starter level.

The offered courses are planned meticulously, structured and resourced sufficiently to meet learners' needs and abilities. Classrooms are equipped with the resources required by the course including books, stories and educational games. Furthermore, highly effective and relevant additional activities are provided to learners to enrich their learning experience and promote their communication skills. For example, the centre hosts guest speakers including lecturers and Bahraini students who are currently studying in the UK, and young and adult learners are given the opportunity to travel to the UK on 'Discover the UK' Project (DUK), which aims at enhancing their learning experience and life skills.

Courses are continuously reviewed as part of the internal verification process at BLC. The review process involves changes and adaptation to improve the quality of assessments.

Moreover, course materials are updated regularly and opportunities for future development are discussed with Cambridge University Press.

## **How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?**

### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

BLC adopts a comprehensive mechanism to support and guide learners. Behavioural, emotional and academic support is provided always to learners at the earliest opportunity to enable them achieve better outcomes. There is evidence that the individualised support provided enabled a significant number of learners to make outstanding progress. Moreover, a variety of activities are available to enrich the learning experience at BLC and improve learners' skills and abilities. Example of these activities includes: discover the UK project, English doctor to support low performers, fairy-tale morning, reading club and drawing competitions. A motivational reward system is in place for all courses; in which learners are awarded as the star of the day or week, in addition, parents receive praise calls and messages about their children's progress and behaviour.

Courses outlines, contents and plans are detailed, up to date and available to stakeholders in advance. Induction sessions, which include guidance on health and safety aspects along with a tour in the premises, are conducted for both learners and parents before the beginning of any course. Information about the centre approach and classroom ground rules is provided during the induction session. Furthermore, an assessment presentation meeting is held to provide information about the course structure, learning outcomes, assessment processes and policies related to the centre.

Learners' progress is closely monitored and learners are updated regularly on their progress. They are always aware of what they need to do to improve through the continuous constructive feedback on their work and assessments. Midterm progress reports are issued after the midterm assessment where learners are encouraged to reflect upon their attainment and prepare action plans to improve their weaknesses. At the end of the course, final progress reports are provided on learners' attainment and progress made during the course. Furthermore, progress update reports are maintained to update parents and learners throughout the course. Progress update reports show strengths, areas for improvements, recommendations, behavioural issues and, attendance and punctuality of each learner. Extremely effective links are maintained with parents. Regular meetings with parents and learners are held to share and discuss learners' progress reports alongside the continuous communication *via* telephone calls throughout the course.

Comprehensive advice and guidance on course selection are provided to learners and parents. In addition, the provider has a user friendly website and informative brochures. Academic support services and guidance on further studies are provided to learners aiming

to take their IELTS examination or to study in the UK universities. The arrangement for the delivery and scheduling of courses are highly flexible to suit the needs of different stakeholders. The facilities of BLC provide an inspiring learning environment. The premises are very well-equipped with stimulating ambiance enriched by educational and inspirational posters.

## **Leadership and management**

### **How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?**

#### **Grade: 1 Outstanding**

Leadership and management are focused on maximising learners' achievement and continuous quality improvement. Overall performance is closely monitored and accurately evaluated, and the management has a clear understanding of the provision and where to improve. Policies and procedures are in place, shared with staff and updated as needed. In addition, all relevant practices are consistent. BLC leadership and management succeeded in spreading a culture of continuous discussion and evaluation of practices that involves all parties, and effectively utilising the outcomes of this process for further development.

BLC has clear vision and mission statements which are focused on improving learners' achievement and are shared with staff. A useful SWOT analysis that considers learners' and parents' feedback about the provision is conducted in collaboration with the staff. Accordingly, a set of relevant strategic and operational objectives are identified for a five-year period 2013 to 2018. Priorities are then identified for each year and a clear action plan is developed for 2014 where tasks are identified for each target, along with accountabilities, timescale and comments on progress achieved so far. Continuous follow-up of action planning is done through frequent discussion and regular meetings between staff and management. Key performance indicators are identified for learners' achievement, trainers and staff. The management structure is fit for purpose, BLC has sufficient and appropriate human resources to enable the achievement of the centre's set of aims and objectives. The senior management team members are qualified and have relevant professional experience. BLC has recruited qualified educational and quality assurance coordinators to form a quality assurance team headed by the operational director with a remit to look after class observations and internal verification of assessment. Qualified native speakers teaching staff are recruited; all teachers have certificate in teaching English language. All staff are recruited

on a full-time basis and effectively deployed; the centre has clear job descriptions that indicate key responsibilities of each staff.

Learners' achievement is closely monitored, analysed and verified. The institute maintains detailed records on learners' achievement which are updated regularly. Achievement data are aggregated and detailed analysis are produced; most important are the comparison of pass rates between courses of the same year or over years to monitor trends of achievement. This system is used also to identify low performance learners and high achievers so that both categories are provided with the needed support inside and outside classroom. Analysis shows that the number of low performing learners is reducing by the end of the course as a result of the support provided. Assessment standards are effectively verified to ensure consistent and fair marking; the quality assurance team verify course work, mid-term and final examination for each group in the course where the results and teachers' feedback are utilised effectively to enable further improvement. Analysis of learners' achievement is further utilised to inform decision making. For example; phonics courses for children under six years old and foundation levels for young people and adults were introduced based on the analysis of achievement, discussion with teachers and feedback of parents.

Qualified teachers are recruited, sufficiently inducted and suitably deployed. Their performance is closely monitored through regular class observations, support and supervision records, and learners' feedback. The feedback provided on the majority of the class observations is informative and identifies areas for development. Moreover, BLC management produces a quality related feedback to teachers which provides a detailed holistic evaluation of each teacher's performance in every course. Staff and teachers are provided with opportunities for training and professional development such as on-line Cambridge English teaching courses.

Effective procedures are in place for assessing, analysing and utilising learners' prior attainment. Fit for purpose placement tests and oral interviews are conducted to evaluate prior attainment of learners, accordingly they are placed in an appropriate course level. The outcomes of this and teachers' specific comments on learners' performance on previous courses are shared with the current course teacher to plan lessons accordingly.

Effective health and safety policies, procedures and practices are in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of learners and staff. Evacuation drill is regularly carried out and relevant guidance is provided to learners. Children and young learners are closely monitored during their presence in the centre to ensure their safety.

Links with parents are well established and their feedback is regularly sought about all process such the effectiveness of the induction and assessment presentations provided quality of the customer services, and their feedback about the provision as a whole.

Learners' views and feedback are regularly sought, and both learners' and parents' feedback are aggregated, analysed and where possible these are used to improve the provision. Some of the actions taken in response to parents' feedback are pausing courses during learners' school examinations period, scheduling the starting time of courses based on learners' age group, introducing new courses such as phonics for children below six years old which benefitted also from teachers' feedback.

The self-evaluation process conducted by BLC is regular and effective. The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) completed for this review is detailed, informative and critical. It also reflects good understanding of the provision and the opportunities for further improvement.

## The provider's key strengths

---

- Learners acquire useful knowledge, language and soft skills and most of them make significant progress considering their prior attainment and the majority maintain their progress over levels
- Teachers are well qualified and use a wide range of teaching strategies and activities, that engage learners in lessons
- Assessment is rigorous and accurate and learners are provided with constructive feedback on how to improve further
- A wide range of English language courses is offered with progression levels that meet the needs of learners and different stakeholders
- Courses are enriched and supported with highly effective and relevant additional activities
- Learners are updated regularly on their performance and are provided with highly effective support and guidance, which help them improve and achieve better outcomes
- There is an effective strategic planning which is focused on learners' achievement and quality improvement
- There is a robust system that closely monitors and evaluates performance across the provision.

## Recommendations

---

**In order to improve, BLC should:**

- ensure that learners are challenged consistently to further their understanding and that lower performing learners are sufficiently supported inside classrooms.